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SUBJECT: USAU: CODEL MEEK MEETING WITH AFRICAN UNION PEACE
AND SECURITY COMMISSIONER

Classified By: Ambassador Cindy L. Courville for reasons 1.4 (B)&(D)

¶1. (U) This cable is from US Mission to the African Union (USAU) Ambassador Cindy L. Courville.

¶2. (U) SUMMARY: On November 29 CODEL Meek met Ambassador Said Djinnit, Commissioner for Peace and Security at the African Union. The discussion focused on concerns about stability, particularly in the Horn of Africa, on the potential for instability imported from the Middle East, and on the need for addressing poverty, investing in people, putting in place systems of good governance, and encouraging private investment. END SUMMARY

¶3. Participants: The CODEL consisted of Representative Kendrick Meek (D-FL), Representative Michael Arcuri (D-NY), Representative Yvette Clarke (D-NY) and Representative Tim Ryan (D-NE). Six Congressional staffers also attended. They were Mark Lewis, House Armed Service Committee, Stephanie Sanok, House Armed Services Committee, Catherine Steadman, Legislative Operations Director, House Armed Service Committee, Jaimie Harrison, Floor Director, Majority Whip, Catlin O'Neill, Floor Operations Director, Speaker's Office and Frank Sobchak. USAU participants were Ambassador Cindy ¶4. Courville and DCM/Political-Economic Officer Alfreda E. Meyers. AU participants were Commissioner Said Djinnit.

¶4. (C) Commissioner Djinnit welcomed the meeting with CODEL Meek as a sign of AU-US partnership and as evidence the US recognizes Africa's strategic importance in international affairs. CODEL members solicited Commissioner Djinnit's views on how the US can be helpful in supporting the AU as it addresses issues such as economic development, humanitarian needs, and security. In response the Commissioner acknowledged US "sensitivity" to security and noted that in the post 9/11 world, the US focus on global security and the nexus of terrorism and religious extremism is understandable. He emphasized that Africans share US security concerns, and are looking to put together mechanisms to address conflicts. He continued that Somalia and Sudan present major challenges, that the Horn of Africa serves as an "open door" to the spread of instability and possibly terrorism, and that the turbulence in Ethiopia/Eritrea is a great worry. Djinnit concluded the AU is focused on stabilizing the situation in Darfur and Somalia, but is not oblivious of threats to stability elsewhere. He emphasized that AU interest in establishing an Early Warning system and the African Standby Force derive from appreciation of Africa's vulnerability. Commissioner Djinnit drew a direct link between the situation in the Middle East and the potential for instability in Africa, welcomed the US initiative in Annapolis, and said resolving the Palestine question would go far in assuaging the Muslim community's sense of marginalization and sense of injustice.

¶5. (C) The CODEL asked about the amalgamation of the AU AMIS peacekeeping force to a hybrid UNAMID force, and how AU member states felt about non-African involvement in UNAMID. Djinnit acknowledged a strong African position that Africans should be empowered to address their own problems, and emphasized that AU leadership recognized the need for assistance from international partners, provided partners did not try to impose solutions. He noted that in Sudan the government did not want non-African troops, but in actuality, the government did not want African troops either. He drew a comparison with the initial reaction of the Somali government, and concluded that these reactions went to the complexity (and intractability) of both conflicts.

¶5. (C) Members of the CODEL asked about AU views and initiative for long-term institution building, with particular reference to issues of private property and the functioning of the courts, noting that dealing with these institutions had a direct impact on attracting private investment for economic development. Djinnit responded the AU is fully aware of the need for private investment and is, in fact, promoting investment. He acknowledged land ownership and tenure as an Africa-wide problem, and an explosive one, and suggested that different governments were approaching the problem differently, gingerly, and with a long-term vision for gradual reform because the social realities carried substantial political risks as well as the potential for instability.

¶6. (U) CODEL Meek did not clear this cable before departure.

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